Beyond the Politics of Race: An Alternative History of Fiji to 1992, by William Sutherland. Political and Social Change Monograph 15. Canberra: Department of Political and Social Change, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, 1992. ISBN–07315–1387–8, vii + 251 pp, map, tables, notes, bibliography, index. Paper, A$16.

Little on Fiji's politics had been published before the military coups of 1987. That much of the deluge of post-coup writing has been unsatisfactory is hardly surprising given the rush for a say about those unprecedented events. Sutherland's book stands out as the most rigorous analysis from a Marxian viewpoint and is strongly grounded in a long period of on-the-spot research and teaching about the subject.

Sutherland intends his work as a critique of "the racialist orthodoxy which for so long predominated in explanations of Fiji politics" (1). His thesis is that in most accounts the racial division has been both overstated and misunderstood. He argues that the growth of modern Fiji as a racially divided society is an expression of class forces. The division between indigenous Fijians and Fiji Indians is largely an expression of a system of capitalist class power that actually gives most of them common interests as members of the "working classes." "We need to recover Fiji's hidden history. Only then will it be possible to see more clearly how the masses have been oppressed and kept divided so that the elite might prosper" (4).

In Part 1 Sutherland considers economy and society during the last few decades before colonial rule began. His account of native Fijian society stresses oppression of commoners by chiefs, arguing that "beneath the apparent generosity [of exchange relations in traditional society] lies a reality of inequality and exploitation" (11). He examines how the Europeans built their own class power through alliances with certain chiefs, and then tries to show that the colonial state was established primarily in support of capitalism. The much-vaunted British objective of protecting Fijian interests was simply an ideological validation of European political and economic power.

In Part 2 Sutherland suggests that the real purpose of indirect rule of the Fijians through chiefs "was the containment of any potential indigenous threat to colonial rule. In reality, therefore, protection was given not so much to the Fijian people but to colonial capitalism" (25), including the security of Indian sugar-cane farming on which it depended. The separation of Fijians and Indians under colonial rule was a requirement of the European capitalist project.

Part 3, "Contradiction and Crisis in Neocolonial Fiji 1960–1992," is especially valuable for its account of the growth of the Fijian political and administrative elites' share in the capitalist economy via management and ownership, the creation of a small but powerful Fijian bourgeoisie strongly overlapping with the dominant Fijian political leadership. Sutherland's analysis of this process is perhaps the book's major strength.

Uncritical use of orthodox Marxian conceptual dogma has inevitably given

the book some weaknesses. In asserting that "the fundamental contradiction" in precontact Fijian society was "the exploitation of commoners by chiefs" (8), Sutherland disregards the cultural meaning of hierarchy for Fijians: the close interrelation of values of community, land, spirituality, and chieftainship. To stress the importance of this cultural configuration is not to deny that in Fijian history chiefs have sometimes become oppressive and exploitive toward some of their people. But to characterize Fijian hierarchy in these terms is Eurocentric and misleading, even in respect to the position of chiefs today.

The claim that the colonial state worked in unison with European capitalism rather than attempting to protect Fijian interests is overstated to the extent that it ignores the pronounced tensions between the colonial rulers and European settlers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The governors firmly resisted the settlers' continuing demands for more Fijian land and labor. Indeed, European interests were perhaps better served before British annexation, for chiefs were then only too willing to sell land and supply workers to the planters. The Marxian argument cannot explain why the colonial state decided to import workers from India rather than compel Fijians to provide the labor for capitalism. Nor does it explain why the colonial rulers continued to be so respectful of Fijian land rights.

There really seems little basis for arguing that colonial rule was set up to serve capitalist interests. But once established, the colonial state needed local capital as a source of funds, and the problem of accommodating service to capitalism with other commitments (especially to Fijian chiefs) became an ongoing feature of the scene. A similar distinction must be made in respect to Sutherland's assertion that behind the recent military coups lay a "class agenda." That the coups have had profound impact on class realities, securing economic advantages for some Fijians while disadvantaging others, is not proof that a class objective was the *cause* of the coups.

In short, although Sutherland demonstrates the importance of class as a dimension of society in Fiji, he does not handle the issue of political process quite so well. At the end of the book we are left wondering why, if class is so important, has it not found more expression in political life? Why should popular consciousness be so powerfully shaped by race or ethnicity, and how might this imperative be reduced or contained? This is the crucial question for any analysis of politics in Fiji. It is a question that Sutherland's Marxism cannot answer.

I want to end by emphasizing the book's strengths. Sutherland is certainly not the first scholar to stress the importance of interests cutting across the race divide and the way in which colonial rule articulated a system of indirect rule over Fijians with the project of advancing capitalist economy, but he does this with more analytical rigor and clarity than most other writers. He develops a detailed argument from his Marxian premises, and the presentation is crisp and systematic.

This book is a most readable and stimulating contribution to the academic literature on Fiji.

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Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving, by Annette B. Weiner. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992. ISBN Cloth 0–520–07603–6, paper 0–520–07604–4, xiii + 232 pp, map, photos, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth US$35, paper US$13.

This is an ambitious and rewarding work, described by the author as "an experiment in a new kind of ethnographic interpretation regarding those critical and perennial problems centered on the norm of reciprocity, the incest taboo, and women's roles in reproduction" (ix). By taking into account "the meaning of women's labor in cloth production and of women's political control over significant reproductive areas of cultural life" (ix), the theoretical thrust of the book is the development of a theory of exchange which shows that gifting is much more complicated than anthropology's concentration until now on the "return of the gift." Successful attempts to keep particularly precious objects out of circulation both create and confirm relations of social hierarchy. In following the paradox of "keeping-while-giving" into the realm of social and political relations between men and women, Weiner illuminates the significance of cross-sibling bonds in many Oceanic societies. The taboo on physical relations between siblings has often masked their symbolic incest mediated by ritual, gifts, and natal family possessions, which ensure the fertility of each sibling through the services of the other and, thus, the creation of future generations of people, descent lines, and kinship groups.

The four substantial chapters focus the theoretical discussion on the Maori Hau, and on cloth production and social reproduction in other Polynesian societies. The hierarchical social formations are contrasted with more egalitarian communities in a section entitled "The Defeat of Hierarchy: Cosmological Authentication in Australia and New Guinea Bones and Stones." Individuals from these societies are not allowed to accumulate wealth objects or construct, thereby, relations of hierarchy or preeminence for themselves. Finally, the author readdresses the *kula* institutions of the Melanesian Massim to show how ardently exchange partners desire to hold on to a particular *kula* valuable as long as possible, for even twenty or thirty years, a whole generation, "as if it were inalienable" (133), even though the shell must eventually reenter *kula* exchange.

Weiner's canvas is admirably wide and covers a number of places within the culture areas of Australia, Melanesia, and Polynesia. Her field observations are patchy, being drawn from the Trobriands at various times from 1971 to 1991, and include four months in Western Samoa. Her own data, augmented by a great deal of secondary material, are played against the west-